An Introduction to William Butler Yeats :

William Butler Yeats, popularly called as W.B. Yeats is a distinguished poet, whose poetry expounds romantic as well as realistic, spiritual as well as material features. Though belongs to the modern era, he was deeply romantic, has illustrated Innisfree beauty. Byzantiam beauty where golden birds sing in golden boughs. He used myths, legends from Greek literature abundantly and has presented them in English style. The song of wandering Aengus depicts him as a lover while "when you are old" presents his harassment love. Leda and the Swan' depicts changes in humans vs unchanged nature. The Gyre describes philosophy of life.

W.B. Yeats the most remarkable leader of the Irish literary movement and the romantic revival of the late nineteenth century was born near Dublin in 1865. His father and brother were painters. He himself studied art for some time. He took interest in the Renaissance of the Irish theatre in the 1900's. By the First World War he had been known as a major literary force and by 1925 he had been widely recognized as a major poet. He died in France in 1939. For his contribution to literature he was awarded Nobel prize in 1923. Three women influenced his literary output most. They were Maud Gonne and Lady Gregory. Maud Gonne is regarded as the poetic spirit of W.B. Yeats, with Moud Gonne., W Yeats remained in love for many years. Their love relation could not be transformed to matrimonial relation. The other lady Gregory collaborated with W.B. Yeats on the Abbey Theatre. One other lady's influence is also marked in his poems. This other lady was his wife. He married her at the age of fifty-two under her influence stability and a sense of fulfilment came to his later poems.

Like so many of his contemporaries, Yeats was acutely conscious of the spiritual bareness of age and his whole artistic career is best seen as an attempt at first to escape from the sordid materialism which he found one every hand and later to formulate new positive ideal which would supply his spiritual needs. In the easy charm and delicate smooth grace of his early work. The influence of the pre Raphalities is clearly seen. It was something of the melancholy picturesques of that school, but with a mystical, dream like quality peculiarly its own. A believer in magic and kindred arts Yeats sought to the land of fairy and looked for his themes in Irish legend and the simple element impulses of man's primitive nature. The best remedy for the emptiness of the present seemed a return to the simplicity

of the past. To this period belong his narrative poem. The Wanderings of Oisin (1889) which first established his reputation Poems (1895). The Wind Among the Reeds (1889) and the Shadowy Waters (1900). and it was in these early days that he wrote many of the lyrics, whose simplicity of style and melodic beauty gave them a place in numerous collections of modern verse, probably the best known of them is the lake Isle of Inisfree (written in 1893).

Between 1900 and 1910 much of years time was devoted to the drama and philosophical and literary essay, but such poetry and produced during this period shows a gradual movement away from the escapism of his early work, and a steadily growing courage in grasping the contemporary reality. The increasing realism of this period, is clearly seen in The Green Helract and other poems (1910) and Responsibilities (1914) which strike a more personal note. It was however, the impact of the 1914-18 war and even more of the Irish troubles of 1916 which brought him face to face with the need to grapple with the realities of life. His mystical and philosophical studies and his excursion into spiritualism led to the promulgation of new philosophical system but with the added force of new maturity which most clearly to be seen in the poems dealing with his own experiences. He continued to write with undiminished vigour until his death and the last period belong the Crazy Jane poems. Some of which had appeared in the Tower and The Winding Stair. In theme, his philosophy, hidden beneath a mask of childlike simplicity which is put into the mouths of such characters as the fool. They appeared in new Poems (1988) and Last Poem (1938).

It is no exaggeration to describe Yeats as one of the most difficult of modern poet. His pre-occupation with the attempt to formulate philosophical system which could replace the scientific materialism of his age underlies most of his latter verse. It is doubtful whether he even succeeded in crystalling a completely systematized philosophy and his most comprehensive exposition of his ideals. A Vision (1925) is very obscure.

After his brief period of pre raphaelite escapism he gradually involved his own positive faith. His trust was in the imagination and intuition of man rather than in scientific reasoning and his attempt was to reach back, through the study of Irish folklore and legend to the primitive impulses of human life, the natural man (the peasant of the fool) he felt to be more in contact with these primary forces than the intellectual man of the world and this idea and his great belief in poison of frenzy led in his later work to a constant assersion of the importance of the human individuality. An ideal type of being was the solitary soul, above the crude world of politics and action. Yeats believed in magics and other forms of superstition. And his later poems though was much influenced by his study of India and other mystical philosophies and the excursion into spiritualism which became more frequent after his marriage in 1916 to a medium.

Convinced, of the immortality of the soul, he saw in man a dual personality, made up of self which is the product of man's social training and Anti Self, which is constantly struggling against self to find freedom in the world of the spirit. Between this world of spirit and the world of reality he found a bridge in poetry.

Yeat's philosophy is often expressed carefully devised system of symbols. Some purely private, others drawn from his study of philosophy on his readings in the works of

the French symbols or of earlier symbolical poets, particularly Black and Shelly. By means of them he succeed in expressing those deep emotional experiences which he felt to be otherwise incapable of political communication, but sometimes they serve only to acentuate the obscurity of his poems. The reader's difficulties arose mainly from Yeats use of the same symbol to represent a variety to things thus "The Tower" many represent among other things and intellectual refuge, or the soul's yearning for the world of the spirit, other of this well-known symbols are The Moon, The Swan and Byzantium.

From the first Yeats was an accomplished poetic artist. Though his mastery of language and rhythm grew steadily throughout his career from the pre Raphaelite aestheticism of his early verse with is quest for beauty its conscious often sentimental simplicity and its languid melodic grace he developed a more direct and verile expression. There is the same delicacy of workmanship and the gorzeous phrase still flashes among the everyday language and personal direct expression of his maturity. Always he uses the traditional verse forms modified sometimes to suit his own needs but now the Rhythms approach more closely to those of ordinary speech. Yet the subtlety of his patterns is much treat to music of his verse.

Yeats himself has written a good deal about the theory and practice of his art. From his various letters of introduction written to works of others and from the general introduction to its own work entitled the first principles as also from his numerous prose writing it will be clear that his theory of poetry kept changing from time to time, also its practice. In the initial stage of his poetic career Yeats was in agreement with the view of his father than dramatic poetry was preferable because of its being and pointed in outline while the lyric is vague and indistinct. In accordance with this view he wrote a number of plays with false and incoherrent plots. The large portion of his early poetry is Lyrical. Further he appears to favour propagandist idea and bestows high praise on the works of nationalist poets. He utilises his poetry to resurrect and revitalise Irish Legend's folk lore myths and heroic tales thereby making Irish writers conscious, aware of their past. He holds the view that possession of literature is necessary for a nationality to be counted as great. By his single minded devotion and application he gives the awakening Irish literary movement the impress of his own personality.

And yet under the dominating influence as French symbolists and English Aesthetes in the nineteen switched over to the art for arts sake view and gave himself over to the pure poetry from which everything is the nature of exteriority was scrupulously excluded. He now came to hold that poetry should concern itself solely with the discovery and delination of beauty having nothing to do with politics religion etc. not even the description of nature for nature's sake. He said that the faction of poetry should picture forth the sensations surging and swirling in the poets mind which can be done by the use of symbols only. He further observes on one of his essays that arts should free themselves from the influence of their age and from his life and should be from to absorb themselves in beauty. He adds that poety is not criticism of life but the discovery and depiction of a hidden life. But this phase of view i.e. Art for Art's sake proved only a nine days wonder. He soon came to regard a body of poetry detached and divorced from life as sentimental and womanish and pronounced his dislike for the sort of poetry which sings with sweet insinuating feminine voice of the dwellers in that country of shadows and hallow images. The factual position is

that the artist derive him impressions from reality and imparts to them from and colour by imagination. The impression derived from reality thus acquire a distinct life and tone of their own which results from a fusion of fact and fantacy. The poet lies in the real as well as in the imaginary world. This truth dawned upon. Yeats only in the last phase of his career and his later poetry is pleasant fusion of the real with the ideal of fact with fiction.

In his later phase of creative career Yeats describes the modern realists who mistake the circumstance for the centre. He insists time and again on the need for contact with the people and on living individual speech. He further emphasises that the life of the present should be interlink with the life of the past the synthetic power of the poet's imagination and genius. Beneath the conscious there lies the subconscious and the unconscious which is comprised not of individual experiences alone but also of the experience of his ancestor and he must be stired and fully exploited to make a work of art really impressive and effective. Yeats achieved and it successfully in his later poetry. All great poetry is personal in the sense that all observation and experience before coming an appropriate theme to be clothed with verse must pass through the transforming process of the poet's imagination. The poet is essentially solitary man handing his innerself the essential man in his poetry. But there must be fusion of the personal with impersonal he born. The charm and greatness of Yeat's later poetry is the part of such happy fusion.

Yeats was a born poet and held his calling in high esteem relieved that a poet must express only what he really and sincerely his heart of hearts. He put the highest premium on artistic mystry. He regarded poetry in the common sense of the soul. He might have had a philosophy or system of his own but he was never influenced by it in the poetry except it helped him to make poetic good sense. Mysticism is not a doctrine or systematised philosophy. It is a temper a mood. A mystic apprehends that there is a divine reality behind and within the ordinary world perceptible by consistent with reason and logic. In other words mysticism is matter of experience of faith of intuition rather than reason. Besides the mystic is not only conscious of a divine presence in nature he also felt that there is essential identity of being between man nature and God. This faith in the oneness of all in the cardinal point of mysticism. Since mysticism is not capable of national interpretation the term is loosely applied to all that is obscure and in explicable. Another important side of mysticism is a faith in the immortality of the soul. The body may die but the soul survives and keep living on as part of eternal. The chief features of mysticism may be summarised as follows.

(1) It is an appreciation of divine presence in nature.

(2) It is a consciousness of the essential oneness of all.

(3) It is a matter of faith. It is incapable of being communicated logically.

(4) It is a belief in the immorality of human soul which animates the physical frame of flesh and blood.

(5) A mystic has experience and visions and he convinced of their reality.

(6) The term is also used to denote what is obscure and incapable of rational interpretation. Such use is not accurate in sense but loose Yeat's poetry has an under current of mysticism from the beginning to the end. It has been remarked that the world of Yeat's poetry is world of a mystic visionary in which the Gods and fairies of oeltie mythology

live again. His early creation include three poems on Indian themes and the Indian landscapes of these poem are pervaded with the life of spirit enveloping the univers This belief remained and integral constituent of his poetry upto the very and this belief is given an emphatic expression in the Indian upon God. Yeat's mind and temper were in tune with many a thing that he came across in Indian philosophy and Indian thought proved instrumental is giving clarity and shape to his own convictions.

Yeats had lost faith in christianity and victorian science at quite and early stage in his life. He had convictions of his own and he was anxiously looking about for system which could give him to study magic astronomy. Theosophy the doctrines of Plato and politeness besides other occult systems. The vision this system of Yeats is a curious blend of philosophy mythology magic and expository symbolism. The entire system is a matter of faith and consequently Yeats has failed despite his best efforts to make it explicable to his readers. Yeats was subject to visions and trances like the mystic. He had experiences too and the sought to communicate it all to his readers. A few poem expose his spiritualistic experience and visions. For example the poem All Sail Night has for its theme a sense a practice for calling up departed spirits. In the Second Coming the vision is prophetic giving as a deep insight into the formidable future. In the poem Sailing to Byzantium, the images and intellectual solitude in which he could experience a mystic delight and joy. The experience enshrined the following link in mystical in essence.

"So great a sweetness flow into the breast
We must laugh and we must sing
We are blest by every thing
Everything we look upon in least."

Like the work of other mystics Yeat's poetry is obscure and intricate. He is a mystic in more sense than one. And yet he differs from a true mystic in some important respects. For one thing his belief in magic and the supernatural waters down his mysticism A true mystic profess his faith in one spirit of mind working in Nature shaping all objects and phenomena. Yeats confuses this faith oneness of all with belief is the fairy world and a host of spirits demons etc. which can be conjured up by the magical symbols. In the second place, mysticism adjures life and its pleasures. It is other worldly and lays stress on asceticism and a negation of life. The chief point in Yeats poetry on the contrary is a lust for life. In the poem entitled. The Dialogue of Self and Soul like is not renounced. It is accepted positively and with passionate zest. Even on his old age, Yeats is eager to enjoy the benefits and blessings of life and prayers for old man's frenzy. In the politics a poem of the last phase he says that he cannot fix his attention on Roman, Russian or Spanish poetics with that girl standing there and desires.

"But O' that I were young again
And held her in my arms."

The sort of longings is riduculous in the case of an old man who is mystic about. Thirdly Yeats scrached for pattem all his life which a mystic tries to shelter the felters of every hind of pattern. He seek to impose order not as the mystic does to break down a too neatly order system and get beyond it. He turns to mysticism not in search of shattering now incites but in quest of categories often maintaining a casual scepticism concerning what to the mystics themselves the essential truths.